

likelihood that Iran can pose much of a conventional threat to the Gulf so long as the United States maintains a strong forward military presence.”

While treating the Iranian military build up as a threat to US interests in the Persian Gulf region, Kemp fails to note that the growing American military sales to the Saudis and the other Gulf sheikhdoms are also causing more than their fair share of concern in Teheran. Iranian foreign policy activism and its alleged support for a number of terrorist organizations are also a source of concern. However, it is also true that it is the economic ineptitude and pervasive political corruption in Egypt and Algeria that are the chief variables contributing to the popularity of political extremism within their borders. If the economic asymmetries between the rulers and the ruled were not to grow in these countries, Iran could do little to fan the flames of extremism. The author fails to make this point in this study.

Kemp’s suggestion of a constructive engagement between the United States and Iran, I am sure, will not be considered seriously by the Clinton administration. Remembering how difficult it has been for his predecessors to deal with Iran, President Clinton is likely to follow a policy that will keep the United States and Iran enemies, at least throughout the remainder of the 1990s.

Overall, without breaking much new ground, Kemp’s study follows the path of a reasoned argument. It does not tell anything new to students of Iran; however, it should be read by the officials of the Clinton administration since they have not manifested much understanding of Iran.

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Copson, Ramyond. *Africa’s Wars and Prospects for Peace*. M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

Raymond Copson has written an excellent book which cogently and coherently examines the crisis of conflict in Africa. He begins with a startling review of the costs that African wars have imposed on the continent. He surveys Africa’s wars since 1980 and provides a rough delineation based on notions of “gravity.” He then offers an analysis of the causes of these wars, detailing both domestic factors and the international dimension. Further, he attempts “to weigh the prospects for peace and war in Africa over the next few years, particularly in light of major changes now affecting African countries and the international system.” Finally, he suggests some ways in which the international community might attempt to influence conflict management and movement toward peace.

Copson’s examination of the costs of wars in Africa immediately highlights the major drawback to writing a book on African wars — conflict and violence are so endemic that you can never really get a true snapshot of the continent. This is complicated, he rightly notes, by the lack of reliable data.

The extent of the disaster may never be fully grasped, both the technical and emotional reasons. Data on fatalities, coming from remote regions of remote countries, are highly uncertain. Available information must be treated with caution since both governments and non-governmental organizations may have an interest in over- or under-reporting casualty figures. (p. 3)

Nonetheless, Copson presses forward, examining as best he can war's impact on the people themselves, as well as African cultures, societies and economies.

Copson then identifies eleven wars in Africa since 1980: Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Somalia, Liberia, Namibia, Western Sahara, Chad and Rwanda. He defines war as involving fighting "on a substantial scale between troops of the regime and the armed forces of one or more internal resistance movements." (p. 27) The wars in Sudan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Somalia, claims Copson, were far greater than the others in the scale of both fighting and the toll they exacted. He outlines the historical development of these major wars, then turns his attention to the "lesser" wars. (Here we can certainly not fault the author for publishing a book on African conflicts just prior to the horrifying devastation in Rwanda following the fateful April downing of the aircraft carrying the presidents of both Rwanda and Burundi.)

Following these brief histories of the most recent conflicts (which the author himself notes may be skipped or skimmed by most Africanists), Copson turns his attention to the factors which contribute to African wars. He begins with the domestic factors; these are again standard to students of Africa: weak African states, poor policy, ethnic and regional realities, political beliefs and ideology, poverty and easy access to weapons. He also notes environmental factors which complicate underlying tensions. He hints at his later contentions, noting that while poverty is likely to be the reality of the foreseeable future, progress is being made in movement toward democratization and human rights, especially with the prodding of international donors.

While the causes of Africa's wars are essentially internal, claims Copson, international factors did play contributory roles and sometimes were highly significant factors in conversion of state-society conflicts into war. Whether backing a particular regime or strengthening resistance forces, he notes, "foreign involvement in Africa's wars unquestionably raised the level of violence." (p. 104) He then briefly outlines the motives for involvement of actors at three levels: neighboring states, African regional actors and external or non-African powers. Copson concludes that early in the 1980s international factors exacerbated tensions, but that by the end of the decade "the international dimension was more a source of mediation and pressure for restraint, making substantial contributions toward conflict resolution." (p. 149)

Copson begins his conclusions by noting two encouraging trends which "give grounds for hoping Africa's burden of war will ease considerably in the years ahead." (p. 156) First, despite all the pitfalls, African domestic reforms appear to

be gaining momentum. The second set of encouraging developments, he says, is in the international system itself, where the incentives for harmful external involvement in Africa's conflicts has declined sharply. While Africa will probably continue to suffer wars for a long time to come, says the author, these favorable trends should be nurtured.

Finally, Copson concludes with a rather stark assumption: external actors, who are crucial to easing Africa's burden of war, will remain interested in Africa to a significant degree. These actors, then, could contribute in a variety of ways: providing additional support for African political reform, providing economic aid, placing pressure on combatants, encouraging adherence to international law, supporting regional conflict resolution efforts, restraining arms supplies and pursuing programs of humanitarian diplomacy and intervention.

While optimistic, Copson is in no way blind to the arguments which completely undercut his thesis. It is conceivable that crucial external actors will turn their back on Africa. Certainly it is arguable that Western Europe is preoccupied with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Perhaps the United States will turn more slowly toward a new isolationism. Yet recent activities in both Rwanda and Haiti seem to point to a new activism, an activism which, as Copson notes, could bode well for a continent which has been wracked with poverty and violence.

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Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993.

John Lewis Gaddis divides historians into "lumpers" and "splitters," distinguishing those whose primary concern is breadth of vision from those concentrating on in-depth examination. In this impressive little volume, Ronald Suny sets out emphatically to be a "lumper," presenting a panoramic view of the development of the nationalities of the old Russian empire over the course of a century, from the waning decades of that empire to the collapse of its successor, the Soviet Union.

Suny's primary goal, which he undeniably achieves, is to show that the development of nationality-based politics (nationalism) and of class-based politics (socialism) are intimately bound up with each other, and that the particular shape nationalist or socialist politics takes in a given area is historically contingent. (p. 18) He further contends that nations and classes are formed largely by people talking about nationality and class. Among the key historical forces shaping such politics, therefore, are the political parties, newspapers, and intellectuals who carry on the discussion (p. 10), along with the states whose policies shape national consciousness.